



Cabinet 25 June 2008

Boundary Committee Review of Suffolk (Jun08/11)

1. Summary and Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on activity since submission of the concept statement.
- 1.2 The report to Council on 8 April 2008 put in place arrangements to respond to issues arising from the review. To avoid the need for special meetings of Cabinet or Council over the summer this report also seeks to put in place arrangements for the sign-off of the financial workbook and the nomination of councillors to any external working groups which may be need to be formed.
- 1.3 To advise Cabinet that the formal response to the Boundary Committee proposal will be considered at Full Council on 23 September 2008.
- 1.4 To advise Cabinet that consultation with the wider community will be undertaken during the summer period appropriate to the proposals put forward by the Boundary Committee. The results of this exercise will be incorporated into the council's formal response.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note that full Council on 8 April 2008 gave the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the delegated authority to respond to issues arising from the review, which would include input into the assumptions needed to complete the financial workbook. This would be done in consultation with the Cabinet, and the St Edmundsbury Councillor Reference Group.
- 2.2 That the Leader of the Council be given delegated authority to nominate to any joint working group of councillors which might be convened to facilitate the completion of the financial workbook and the assumptions which underlie it.
- 2.3 To give delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to sign-off St Edmundsbury Borough Council's contribution to the financial workbook.

3. Corporate Objectives

- 3.1 The recommendation(s) meet the following, as contained within the Corporate Plan:-
 - (a) Cabinet Commitments: Provide a strong voice for West Suffolk.
 - (b) Vision 2025: The review has the potential to impact on all the themes.

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4. Key Issues

4.1 Activity since the submission of the concept to the Boundary Committee

- 4.1.1 Presentation on the St Edmundsbury concept made to the Parish Council conference on 22 April 2008.
- 4.1.2 Chief Executive gave a joint presentation on the arguments for a West Suffolk unitary to the Executive meeting of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils on 30 April 2008.
- 4.1.3 Parish Councils, key partners in the business sector and other public agencies were supplied with copies of the concept and invited to make their views known to the Boundary Committee.
- 4.1.4 On 8 May 2008, the Boundary Committee were sent a map showing St Edmundsbury Borough Council's preferred boundary line for a West Suffolk Unitary, along with further information about the principles of integrating services.
- 4.1.5 On 11 May 2008, responses were provided to the questions posed by the Boundary Committee in their letter of 22 April 2008 following consideration of the concepts received.
- 4.1.6 On 6 June 2008, the Boundary Committee were sent a letter containing an analysis of the reasons given by nearly 100 people and organisations for favouring a West Suffolk Unitary option. Many of the organisations were very local ones, such as community associations.
- 4.1.7 Press briefings with the Bury Free Press and East Anglian; press releases 'Big enough to work, small enough to connect', and 'reasons why West Suffolk works'; liaison meeting with communications staff from Ipswich, Babergh and Suffolk Coastal District Councils.
- 4.1.8 "Best for the West" pages set up on website with on-line forms for people to register support, and dedicated email and phone numbers set up.
- 4.1.9 Articles in Rural News, Town Centre News, Community Spirit, E-Teamwork; staff briefings in May 2008.
- 4.1.10 Presence at Nowton Park fair raising awareness of the review and giving local people the opportunity to express a preference for a whole Suffolk unitary or West Suffolk.

4.2 Anticipated activity after the 7 July 2008 publication of the Boundary Committee proposal for consultation

- 4.2.1 Following the publication of the proposal (with or without a variation) there are two streams of work to be completed over the summer.
- 4.2.2 St Edmundsbury Borough Council will have the opportunity to respond to the proposal(s) put out for consultation. A response will be prepared for debate at the Council meeting on 23 September 2008, in readiness for the 26 September 2008 close of consultation.
- 4.2.3 This response is the Council's opportunity to formally record its view of the proposal(s). The extent to which St Edmundsbury will wish to actively campaign and consult over this period will depend on the proposal under consideration.
- 4.2.4 Over a shorter period, up until 8 September 2008, the Section 151 officers of each authority will be involved in completing the financial workbook which will be used by the

Boundary Committee to establish whether the proposal(s) meet the government's financial viability criteria.

- 4.2.5 Sitting behind the figures entered into the workbook will be a range of assumptions about service provision and the structure of each new authority to be created.
- 4.2.6 It is suggested that whatever the proposal being consulted on, it would be to the benefit of people in West Suffolk for the Council to be fully involved in this process.
- 4.2.7 Which authority takes a lead in this work will depend on the proposal(s) being consulted on. While the basis of the structures and methods of service delivery of a new authority have been addressed in principle in the information already provided to the Boundary Committee there will be a series of assumptions which will have to be made to complete the workbook.
- 4.2.8 Input into these assumptions is likely to be needed at short notice over the summer period when there are few formal meetings. Over this period the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Cabinet and Councillor Reference Group, will be using the delegated authority to respond to issues arising from the review which full Council gave when it considered report Y668 on 8 April 2008.
- 4.2.9 The degree of consultation will depend on the timescale for responses to issues. These are likely to be short so much will necessarily take place by e-mail.
- 4.2.10 Another approach which might be used is for a joint working group of councillors to be convened from the various authorities involved. To cater for this approach it is recommended that the Leader of the Council should have the delegated authority to nominate St Edmundsbury Borough Councillors to sit on any joint working group.
- 4.2.11 Whatever the proposal, and whichever authority leads the work to complete the financial workbook, there is an expectation that each authority will sign off the workbook. It is recommended that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to sign off the financial workbook.

5. Other Options considered

- 5.1 The Council could choose to take a passive approach to the next stages of the review by only engaging in a minimal way in the completion of the financial workbook and not formally responding to the Boundary Committee proposal. A passive, reactive approach would mean that the Council would lose any opportunity to influence the future shape of service delivery in West Suffolk. This is contrary to the Cabinet's commitment to provide a strong voice for West Suffolk.

6. Community impact *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and diversity issues)*

6.1 General

- 6.1.1 The model for community engagement put forward in the St Edmundsbury concept places local people and organisations at the heart of influencing the design and delivery of services. It is a flexible model which will allow those individuals and organisations which wish to engage more closely with the council to do so but not assume that all organisations wish to take on greater powers.

6.2 Diversity

- 6.2.1 The approach advocated is based on councillors and staff going out to meet different

communities and groups with different needs, rather than rely on their ability to participate in area forums. Going out to the different groups should provide opportunities for a complete cross section of the population to engage with the Council and have their input into how local services are provided.

7. Consultation

7.1 Formal consultation on the proposal will be carried out by the Boundary Committee when it publishes its proposal. However, as listed in section 4, the Council has done a considerable amount of work to make local people aware of the review and gather their views. Depending on the proposal published some additional consultation work may need to be carried out over the summer.

8. Resource implications *(including asset management implications)*

8.1 If the Government accepts the Boundary Committee's advice and reorganises local government in Suffolk an order will be made to restrict the ways in which Council's but to reorganisation can use their resources in the period leading up to a new authority being created. The Cabinet will wish to consider the implications of such an order being made as part of the budget setting process.

8.2 For the time being the resource implications are providing the staff time to facilitate the work and buying in any outside expertise needed. Council provided an earmarked reserve for this purpose when approving the 2008/2009 budget which meets the current needs.

9. Risk Assessment *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

9.1

Risk area	Inherent level of Risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual Risk (after controls)
The Council fails to take an active role in the review and secure the best outcomes from it for the people of West Suffolk	High	Active involvement at Councillor and officer levels in the development of the concept and discussion within the County. Proactive engagement in completion of the financial workbook. Seeking to influence the shape of the new authority whatever option is consulted on.	Medium
The likely impact on customer satisfaction and staff wellbeing as a new authority is created	High	Maintain communication with the residents, service users and staff as changes occur. PSV and service integration work already underway. Consider developing a retention policy.	Medium
Additional resources needed to cover work related to the review	Medium	Ear marked reserve provided as part of 2008/2009 budget setting	Medium

10. Legal or policy implications

10.1 The legal implications for the finances of the Council have been noted at paragraph 8.1.

10.2 The Council's approach to the review has been in line with the Cabinet Commitment to provide a strong voice for West Suffolk.

10.3 Although the review has far reaching implications for local residents, businesses and partners, the legal and policy implications are in the main these are for the successor authority, not St Edmundsbury Borough Council which would not exist following a reorganisation. However during the transition to a new authority the Council may need to revisit its internal work programme to ensure that development work is not carried out where it would not be of relevance or benefit to the successor authority.

Ward(s) affected	All	Portfolio Holder(s)	Leader of the Council
Background Papers	Y640 and Y668	Subject Area	Economy Support Services

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